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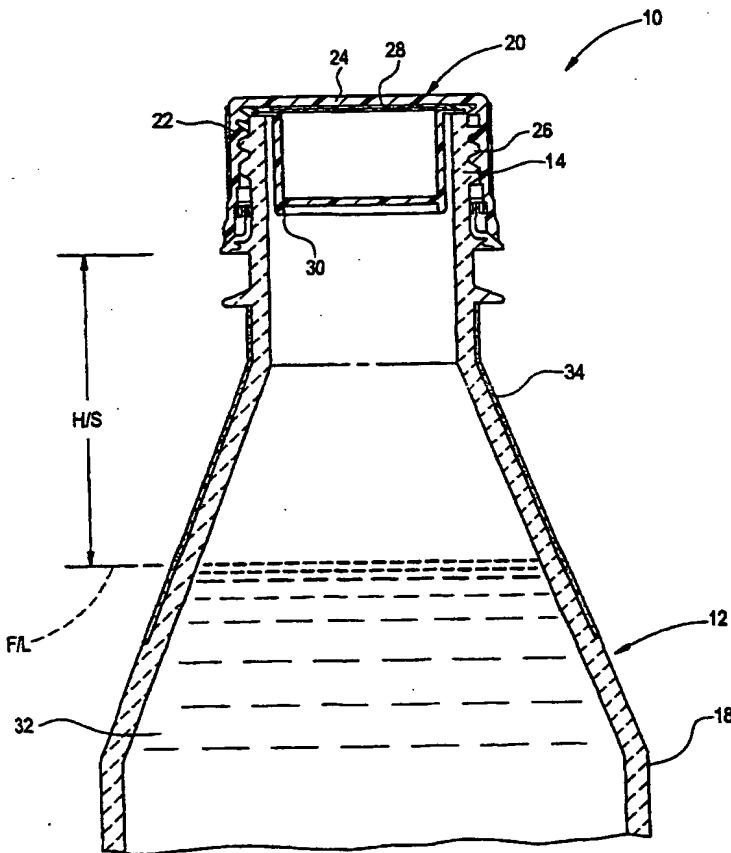
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PRIZE HOLDING CONTAINER CLOSURE AND METHOD OF CONCEALMENT

The present invention relates generally to product packaging which includes a promotional element for consumers, and more particularly to a promotional article including a liquid-filled container having a promotional closure applied thereto, wherein the container is configured to conceal a promotional element positioned in the interior of the closure.

Promotions for products which provide consumers with various prizes have enjoyed widespread popularity for many years. In various forms, such 10 promotions may include gaming elements provided in association with product packaging, whereby consumers play games and/or are awarded prizes by obtaining certain promotional elements attendant to product purchase. In the case of beverages and like consumer products, promotions of this nature have typically employed promotional elements positioned within, or applied to, the interior of a 15 closure applied to an associated bottle or like container.

U.S. Patent No. 5,806,707, incorporated herein by reference, discloses a closure assembly including an inner promotional compartment, as well as a promotional gaming system employing such closure assemblies. This patent also discloses closures having "simulated compartments" which can be employed in the 20 context of an overall gaming system, but which are not intended to retain an award or prize within a compartment, as is the case with the above described closure assembly.

The gaming system of the above patent contemplates that packaged product having compartment-containing closures or simulated-compartment closures 25 will not be easily distinguishable from each other. It is, of course, recognized that the effectiveness of such a promotion depends upon the inability of consumers to distinguish between winning and non-winning articles prior to purchase of the products. It has also been recognized that in some applications, it may be desirable to provide closures having a promotional element (such as in the form of a prize 30 compartment or promotional indicia) positioned within the closures, while other closures are conventionally configured (that is, they do include any simulated compartment or the like).

Accordingly, the present invention is directed to a promotional article, illustrated in the form of a container having a promotional closure applied thereto, wherein the article is configured to conceal the interior of the closure, prior to purchase, thus acting to assure randomness in the selection of winning promotional articles on the part of consumers.

A promotional article embodying the principles of the present invention includes a container having a closure removably applied thereto, with liquid product (such as a beverage) held within the container. Since it is contemplated that the closure arrangement may include a promotional element, such as in the form of a prize compartment or gaming indicia, the present invention includes a arrangement for concealing the interior of the closure. In the preferred form, this arrangement is provided by configuring the exterior of the container to be sufficiently opaque as to preclude easy viewing through the head space of the container, that is, that region between the liquid product and the closure.

Randomness in the selection of products by consumers is thus facilitated.

In a presently preferred form, the present promotional article comprises a container including a neck portion for removably receiving an associated promotional closure. The container further includes a base portion upon which the article is positionable in an upright orientation, and a side wall which extends between the neck portion and the base portion. The neck portion defines an opening into an interior volume defined by the container.

Liquid product, such as comprising a beverage, is disposed within the interior volume defined by the container. The liquid product fills the interior volume to a fill level spaced from the base portion of the container. The liquid product thus defines a head space within the container between the fill level and the neck portion of the container. Thus, the head space generally corresponds to the unfilled portion of the container.

The present promotional article further includes a promotional closure assembly removably fitted to the neck portion of the container for closing the opening defined by the neck portion. The closure assembly includes a closure including a top wall portion and a depending annular skirt portion. In a preferred form, a promotion compartment is positioned inwardly of the top wall portion, and

is surrounded by the skirt portion of the closure. The promotion compartment can be configured in accordance with the teachings of the above-referenced patent, with the compartment preferably being configured to retain a prize (such as currency), a coupon (redeemable for a prize or product discount), or a gaming element (of the type collected for playing a game with the object of winning prizes).

In accordance with the present invention, the promotional article includes an arrangement for concealing the interior of the promotional closure, including at least a portion of the region within the closure bounded by the annular skirt portion. In the illustrated embodiment, the concealment arrangement thus acts 10 to conceal the promotion compartment within the promotional closure assembly, particularly when the article is in a generally upright orientation, that is, with the neck portion of the container defining the uppermost extent thereof. The concealment arrangement can be provided in varying forms, and it is preferred that the arrangement comprise surface treatment of the container in a region of the head 15 space, spaced from the base portion of the container. It is presently preferred that the surface treatment be provided in the form of surface texturing so as to render the region of the head space sufficiently opaque as to conceal the promotion compartment. Alternatively, the surface treatment can comprise a pigmented layer on the outside surface of the container (such as a suitable coating) so as to render 20 the region of the head space sufficiently opaque as to conceal the promotion compartment.

Surface texturing of the container in the region of the head space can be readily accomplished by formation of container-forming molds with suitable surface texturing, so that the molded containers are provided with the desired 25 texturing. Such texturing can be provided in varying forms, including formation of a matte finish, a "frosted" finish, swirl-like patterns, as well as other variations. It is also contemplated that the desired surface texturing can be provided subsequent to container molding, such as by suitable etching of the exterior container surface.

By the concealment arrangement, the interior of the promotional 30 closure, including at least a portion of the region within the closure bounded by the annular skirt portion thereof, is concealed from inspection by consumers prior to removal of the closure from the container. Thus, promotional elements positioned

within the closure, such as in the form of a compartment or indicia provided on the inside of the top wall of the closure, cannot be viewed prior to purchase, and removal of the closure.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become 5 readily apparent from the following detailed description, the accompanying drawings, and the appended claims.

Figure 1 is a side elevational view of a promotional article embodying the principles of the present invention, including a container, a liquid product disposed within the container, and a promotional closure applied thereto; 10 and

Figure 2 is a relatively enlarged, fragmentary, cross-sectional view of the promotional article illustrated in Figure 1.

While the present invention is susceptible of embodiment in various forms, there is shown in the drawings and will hereinafter be described a presently 15 preferred embodiment, with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the invention, and is not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiment illustrated.

With reference to Figures 1 and 2, therein is illustrated a promotional package 10 embodying the principles of the present invention. As will be further 20 described, package 10 is particularly configured for packaging of a liquid product, such as a beverage, with the package used in connection with the product promotion, wherein a promotional closure assembly is fitted to the package. While this specific form of the promotional closure assembly can be varied while keeping with the principles disclosed herein, it is contemplated that the closure assembly of 25 the package include a promotion element positioned generally at the interior thereof, such as by the disposition of a compartment or the like within the element, or by the provision of gaming indicia on the inside of the closure.

The package 10 includes a container 12 including a neck portion 14 which defines an opening into an interior volume defined by the container. In a 30 typical embodiment, the neck portion 14 includes an exterior thread formation configured for cooperative engagement with a like thread formation provided on the associated promotional closure assembly. When received on the neck portion 14 of

the container, the associated closure assembly closes the opening into the interior of the container, thus sealing the contents. The closure assembly is removably mounted on the neck portion by virtue of the cooperating thread formations, with the arrangement accommodating reapplication of the closure to the container if only 5 a portion of the contents of the container are initially consumed.

The container 12 has a generally upright configuration, and includes a base portion 16 upon which the container can be positioned in an upright orientation, as illustrated. The container includes an upstanding side wall 18 which extends between the neck portion 14 and the base portion 16. Typical containers of 10 this nature are ordinarily blow-molded, as will be recognized by those familiar with the art.

Promotional package 10 includes a promotional closure assembly 20 which is received by the neck portion 14 of the container for closing and sealing the opening into the interior volume of the container. In accordance with the illustrated 15 embodiment, the closure assembly 20 includes a closure 22 (sometimes referred to as a cap or shell) having a circular top wall portion 24, and a depending annular skirt portion 26. Skirt portion 26 includes an internal thread formation for cooperation with the external thread formation on neck portion 14 of the container 12. In a particularly preferred form, the closure 22 includes a sealing liner 28, positioned adjacent the top wall portion thereof, with the sealing liner 28 being 20 configured for cooperative engagement with the neck portion of the container for effecting closure of the container.

As noted, the promotional closure assembly 20 includes a promotion element positioned generally within the closure, that is, beneath the top wall portion 25 24 of the closure in a region bounded by the annular skirt portion 26. It is within the purview of the present invention that the promotion element be provided in the form of promotion indicia provided on the inside surface of top wall portion 24, or on sealing liner 28, when such a liner is provided within the closure. However, in the illustrated embodiment, a promotion element in the form of a promotion 30 compartment 30 is provided generally within the outer closure 22 of the assembly. The promotion compartment 30 may be configured in accordance with the teachings of U.S. Patent No. 5,806,707, hereby incorporated by reference, as well as in

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accordance with the teachings of allowed U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/882,395, filed July 10, 1997. As such, the promotion compartment 30 has a generally cup-shaped configuration, with the interior region of the compartment configured to hold a prize coupon, currency, a gaming element, or any like article employed in the product promotion.

While the closure assembly 20 illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 includes the above-described promotion compartment 30, it is also within the purview of the present invention that the promotion element provided within the closure 22 be in the form of a "simulated compartment" resembling the promotion compartment 30, 10 but containing no gaming piece or the like. Such an arrangement is disclosed in the above-referenced U.S. Patent No. 5,806,707, with this patent showing a "simulated compartment" in the form of a generally cylindrical element which depends from a sealing liner of closure 22 positioned adjacent the inside surface of top wall portion 24.

As will be appreciated, the success of a product promotion, wherein only certain ones of a particular product include a gaming piece or prize, depends upon consumers being unable to discern which ones of the product include the prize or the like prior to purchase. A gaming system such as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,806,707 is configured in accordance with this objective, by providing both 20 compartment-containing, and simulated compartment-containing closures. However, under certain conditions, close visual inspection may reveal which closures and containers actually include the desired prize compartments. Additionally, for some applications, it may not be desirable to provide closures having simulated compartments, but rather, closures having compartments or other promotion elements will merely be distributed among conventionally configured closures.

Thus, the present package has been particularly configured for concealing the interior of the closure 22, including at least a portion of the region within the closure bounded by the annular skirt portion 26. The concealment arrangement preferably includes selective treatment of the portion of the container 30 12 so that such a selected portion is rendered sufficiently opaque as to conceal the interior of the associated closure.

To this end, the promotional package 10 is illustrated as including a

liquid product disposed within the interior volume therein, with such product designated 32 in the illustration. As shown in Figure 1, wherein the present package is illustrated in an upright configuration, wherein the neck portion 14 of container 12 defines the uppermost extent of the container, the liquid product fills most, but not all of, the interior volume of the container. As such, the liquid product defines a fill line F/L generally corresponding to the height of the product within the container, with the container in its illustrated upright orientation. In turn, the fill line defines, together with the neck portion 14, a so-called head space H/S, which generally corresponds to that region between the liquid product, and the neck portion of the container after the container has been filled to the intended level.

Depending upon the specific product, the head space may be pressurized (such as in the case of carbonated beverages) or may be under a partial vacuum (such as in the case of so-called hot fill products).

In accordance with the present invention, an arrangement for concealing the interior of the closure 22 is provided on the container 12 in a region of the head space H/S, in spaced relationship to the base portion 16 of the container. The concealment arrangement 34 can be provided in any of a variety of forms. It is presently preferred that surface texturing be provided on the exterior surface of the container 12 for creating the desired concealing effect. Such surface texturing may be provided in the form of a matte finish, a frosted finish, a beaded finish, or any of a variety of other surface textures which render the container sufficiently opaque as to conceal the interior of the associated closure. Certain surface textures are especially aesthetically pleasing, for example, those which tend to provide a "frosty" appearance for the container. Such surface texturing can readily be provided on the container by appropriate texturing of the molds within which the container is formed. Alternatively, it is within the purview of the present invention that a post-molding surface treatment be provided on the container, such as by a surface etching or the like, to effect the desired texturing.

While surface texturing of the container is presently preferred, it is also within the purview of the present invention that the concealment arrangement 34 be provided in the form of a pigmented coating applied to the exterior of the container in the region of the head space H/S, in spaced relationship to base portion

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16. Such a coating can be applied after molding of the container, and can be provided with a pigment selected to complement the container and closure, while rendering the container sufficiently opaque to conceal the interior of the closure fitted to the neck portion.

- 5 It is presently preferred that the concealment arrangement 34 correspond generally to the head space H/S of the container 12, and thus be spaced from the base portion 16 of the container. It is contemplated that the extent of the concealment arrangement 34 be sufficient so as to preclude visual inspection of the interior of the closure 22, even if the present package is tilted or viewed at an angle.
- 10 Thus, it can be desirable for the concealment arrangement 34 to extend beneath the fill line F/L, while still being spaced substantially above the base portion 16 of the container.

15 From the foregoing, it will be observed that numerous modifications and variations can be effected without departing from the true spirit and scope of the novel concept of the present invention. It is to be understood that no limitation with respect to the specific embodiment illustrated herein is intended or should be inferred. The disclosure is intended to cover, by the appended claims, all such modifications as fall within the scope of the claims.

C L A I M S

1. A promotional article comprising:

a container including a neck portion for removably receiving an associated promotional closure, a base portion upon which said article is positionable in an upright orientation, and a side wall extending between said neck portion and said base portion, said neck portion defining an opening into an interior volume defined by said container;

5 a liquid product disposed within said interior volume, said liquid product filling said interior volume to a fill level spaced from said base portion of
10 said container, said liquid product defining a head space within said container between said fill level and said neck portion;

15 a promotional closure assembly removably fitted to said neck portion of said container for closing said opening, said closure assembly including a closure including a top wall portion, and a depending annular skirt portion, and a promotion compartment positioned inwardly of said top wall portion and surrounded by said skirt portion; and

an arrangement for concealing said promotion compartment comprising surface treatment of said container in a region of said head space spaced from said base portion.

20 2. A promotional article in accordance with claim 1, wherein said surface treatment of said container comprises surface texturing so as to render said region sufficiently opaque as to conceal said promotion compartment.

25 3. A promotional article in accordance with claim 1, wherein said surface treatment of said container comprises a pigmented layer on the outside surface of said container so as to render said region sufficiently opaque as to conceal said promotion compartment.

4. A promotional article comprising:

30 a container including a neck portion for removably receiving an associated promotional closure, said neck portion defining an opening into an interior volume defined by said container;

a liquid product disposed within said interior volume, said liquid product filling said interior volume to a fill level such that, in an upright orientation

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of said container with said neck portion defining the uppermost extent thereof, said liquid product defines a head space between said liquid product and said neck portion;

5 a promotional closure removably fitted to said neck portion of said container for closing said opening, said closure comprising a top wall portion, and a depending annular skirt portion; and

concealment means for concealing the interior of said promotional closure, including at least a portion of the region within said closure bounded by said annular skirt portion.

10 5. A promotional article in accordance with claim 4, wherein said concealment means comprises means for rendering at least a portion of said container in a region of said head space sufficiently opaque as to conceal the interior of said promotional closure.

15 6. A promotional article in accordance with claim 5, wherein said means for rendering said portion opaque comprises surface texturing on the exterior of said container.

7. A promotional article in accordance with claim 5, wherein said means for rendering said portion opaque comprises coloring of said container.

8. A promotional article in accordance with claim 4, wherein said promotional closure comprises a promotion compartment positioned inwardly of said top wall portion.

9. A promotional article in accordance with claim 4, wherein said promotional closure comprises promotion indicia on an inside surface of said top wall portion.

25 10. A promotional article, comprising:

a container including a neck portion for removably receiving an associated promotional closure, a base portion upon which said article is positionable in an upright orientation, and a side wall extending between said neck portion and said base portion, said neck portion defining an opening into an interior volume defined by said container;

a promotional closure assembly removably fitted to said neck portion of said container for closing said opening, said closure assembly including a closure

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including a top wall portion, and a depending annular skirt portion, and a promotion compartment positioned inwardly of said top wall portion and surrounded by said skirt portion;

a liquid product disposed within said interior volume, said liquid

5 product filling said interior volume to a fill level such that, in an upright orientation of said container with said neck portion defining the uppermost extent thereof, said liquid product defines a head space between said liquid product and said closure; and

an arrangement for concealing said promotion compartment

10 comprising surface texturing of said container in the region of said head space so as to render said region sufficiently opaque as to conceal said promotion compartment.

11. A promotional article in accordance with claim 10, wherein said liquid product defines a fill line, said arrangement for concealing extending beneath said fill line, while being spaced substantially above the base portion of the

15 container.

FIG. 1

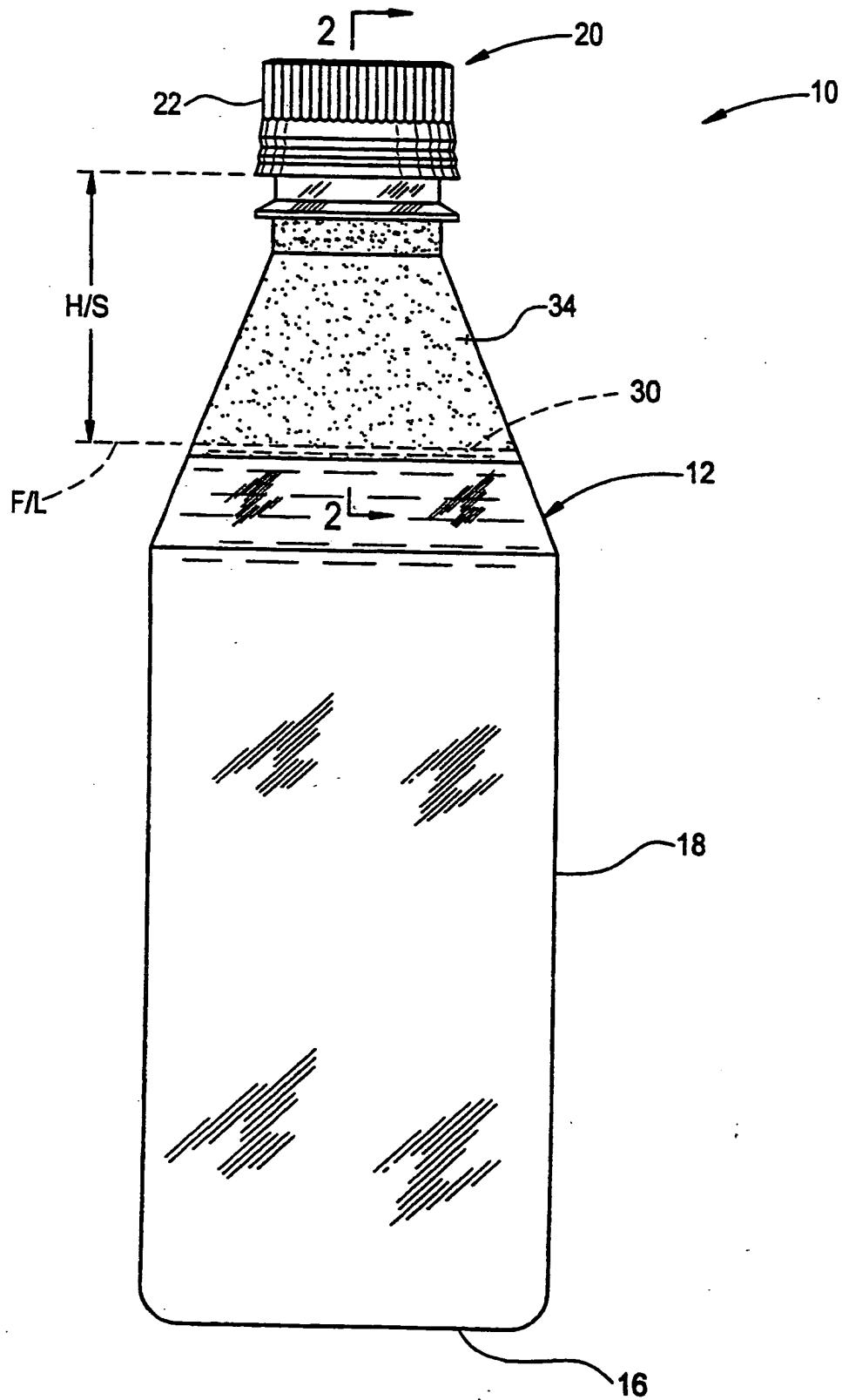
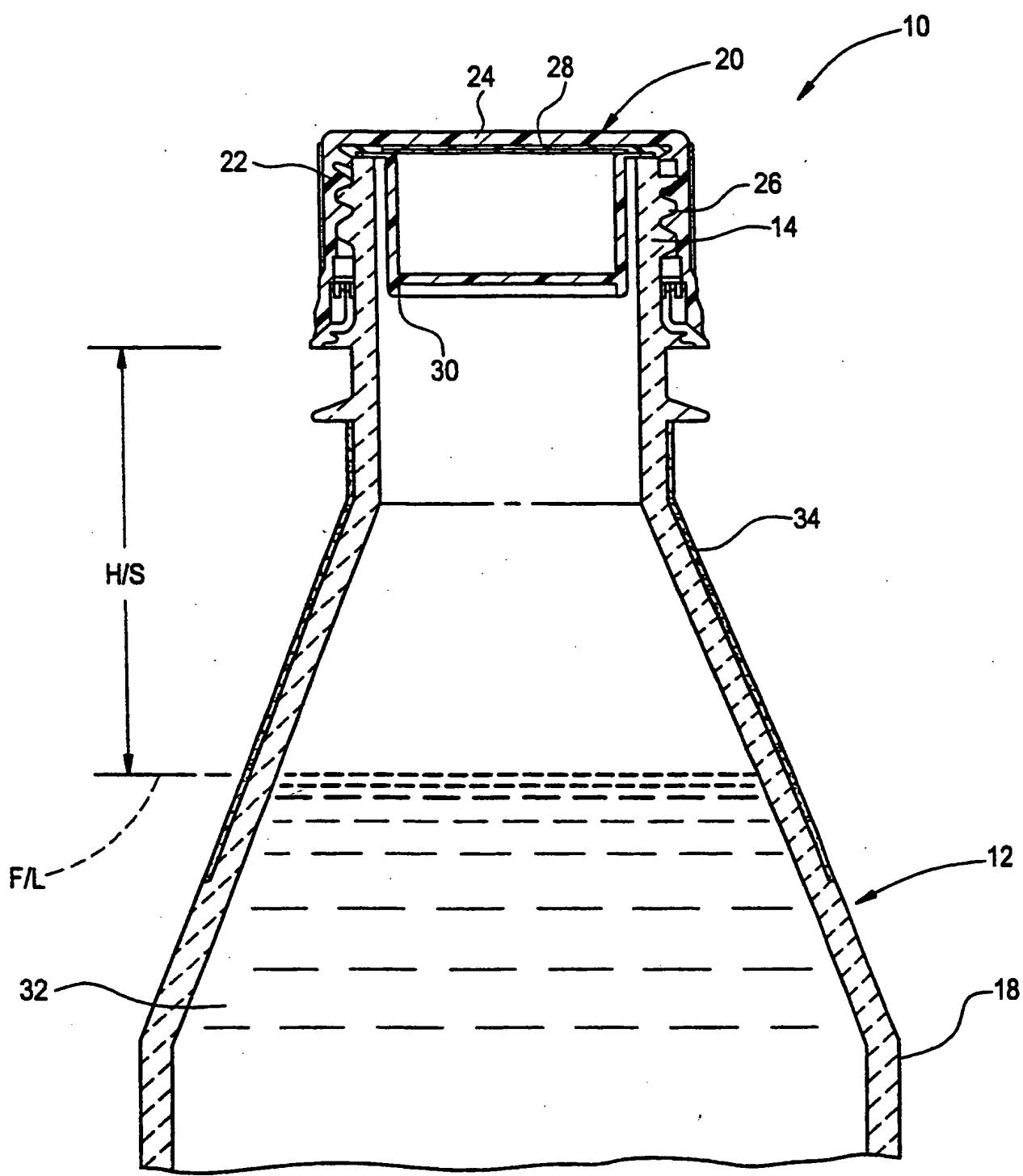


FIG. 2



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internati	Application No
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 B65D51/28 B65D23/08

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5 806 707 A (BOEHM) 15 September 1998 (1998-09-15) cited in the application column 2, line 54 - line 67	4,8
A	US 5 654 022 A (SAYRE) 5 August 1997 (1997-08-05) column 1, line 23 - line 38 column 5, line 46 - line 67; figure 3	1,10
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A	DE 492 598 C (SOC. CHIMIQUE DES USINES DU RHONE) claim	7
		-/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORTInternatlonal Application No
PCT/US 00/14424**C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 99 02417 A (ALCOA) 21 January 1999 (1999-01-21) figure 3 -----	9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

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